

VHSO News Bites

Upcoming Events:

- ♦ National Salute to Veteran Patients, February 14, 2014
- ♦ Valentine's Day, February 14, 2014
- ♦ President's Day, February 17, 2014
- ♦ Daylight Saving Time begins, March 9, 2014

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Volume 5, Issue IV

Winter 2014

Message from the Director

Happy Holidays! I hope that everyone had a good holiday season, sharing it with friends and family, and eating way too much. I know this time of year is extremely hectic, with so many people gone for the holidays and the weather causing problems as well. That is why I want to say thank you to all of our staff, for your continued dedication to VHSO. Especially during this hazardous weather season, thank you to those employees who fare the weather and come in, who put caring for our Veterans first in their mind, and who work hard to keep our facility safe during this time. A special thank you goes to our Engineering & Environmental Management Services, for your continued diligence and quick response to clearing our sidewalks and driveways to make this facility safe for Veterans and employees, I greatly appreciate the work you have done.

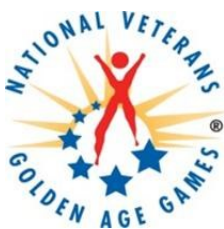


We are fast approaching the 2014 National Veterans Golden Age Games, and I want to encourage all of our staff to volunteer and participate in this event. It is going to take all hands on deck to host such a large and prestigious event, and we are in need of your help. Please be sure to read below for more information about the Golden Age Games and participate in any way you can.

Also, keep in mind that we are now in the window for a visit from the Joint Commission. We have a great facility, great staff, and deserving Veterans, so I am not worried about the site visit. However, please be sure that you feel adequately prepared for their visit, when it does happen. Our Quality and Performance Service has been working hard to make sure we are prepared, so be sure to do your part! I have every confidence that we will be well prepared for the visit, and thank you for your continued efforts.

MARK A. ENDERLE, M.D.
Medical Center Director

The GAMES Are Coming – And We Need YOU!



VHSO is hosting the 2014 National Veterans Golden Age Games on the campus of the University of Arkansas, June 28 – July 2, 2014! Almost 800 Veterans plus their spouses, VA staff, and volunteers will descend upon northwest Arkansas for a week of rehabilitative and therapeutic sports and activities. The NVGAG is one of the six national events sponsored by VA and various organizations nationally and at the local level.

To successfully host such an event requires the support of our local VA staff and volunteers. We have 1200 volunteer slots to fill! We are recruiting staff to serve as event leads, VCS Bingo night, Greeters Committee, fundraising, tailgate party, etc. Positions are filling up fast and we are looking for capable individuals to lead and organize a variety of jobs. Events include checkers, dominoes, table tennis, bowling, horseshoes, swimming, badminton, 9-ball, air rifle, golf, field events (javelin, shot put, discus), track (power walk, precision walk), shuffleboard, cycling, and the Fayetteville exhibition sport of fly tying and fly casting.

Volunteering for and serving at the Games will not only benefit our Nation's heroes, but could be beneficial experience to add to your resume or performance appraisal. Your time at the Games is on a volunteer basis; you do not receive comp time or overtime. If your duties occur during your regular work schedule, you are excused from your duty station (i.e. you do not have to take leave), and you must have your supervisor's approval. Don't miss the fun – call (ext. 65067) or email carol.kick@va.gov today and volunteer to join us in hosting the 2014 National Veterans Golden Age Games!

Heritage Day

VHSO celebrates cultural diversity! At VHSO we want to celebrate our different heritages, and that is why the EEO Committee hosted Heritage Day on Friday, December 20, 2013. The day included the annual Salsa Contest, with homemade salsas submitted by employees, and several booths each describing a different country.

Booths ranged from South Africa, to Japan, to India, to Spain, just to name a few. There were a total of 105 employees who attended the event. Thank you to everyone who hosted and participated!



Privacy Corner—Faxing Documentation

As a reminder to further protect our Veterans personal information from unauthorized persons, the following guidelines are to be followed when faxing documentation.

Facsimile Communications and Disclosures: Documents containing sensitive information, including individually-identifiable information (III) and/or patient health information, must only be transmitted via facsimile (fax) when absolutely necessary.

The following steps must be taken to ensure information is sent to the appropriate destination and not to a machine accessible to the general public:

- Fax number must be verified to prevent misdialing.
- Fax cover sheet must be utilized with all outgoing faxes. **NOTE:** The cover sheet must contain an appropriate confidentiality statement, instructing the recipient to notify the facility if received in error. The **ONLY** sheet authorized for use is located under forms on the VHSO homepage.
- Prior to sending a fax, the recipient should be notified to ensure someone is present to receive the information or that the fax machine is in a secure location (e.g. locked room).
- Confirmation slip must be verified to ensure fax went to the proper number. **NOTE:** If there has been an error, the recipient must be contacted immediately. Misdirected faxes must be returned or destroyed by the recipient.
- Fax transmittals must not include drug, alcohol, HIV, or sickle cell anemia patient information. When deemed necessary, the fax transmittal of sensitive information must be limited to immediate need to render patient care.
- Employees must report improper use or disclosure of sensitive information to the Information Security Officer or Privacy Officer immediately upon identifying the problem.
- To send a fax from the main hospital to a CBOC dial 6+ the four digit number. To transmit outside the VA dial 81+ Area Code +Number.

For questions concerning any privacy related issue, please contact David Smith @ 6-4038.



Veterans Day

Our annual Veterans Day ceremony was hosted on Monday, November 11, 2013 at Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks. In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words: "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..." His words still ring true today, and we were please to be able to show our pride and admiration for our Veterans at VHSO.



Spotlight On: Patient Safety Initiative—Prescribed Narcotic Pain Medication



On May 6, 2013, the Veterans Healthcare System of the Ozarks (VHSO) began the implementation of a Patient Safety Initiative with the goal of reducing the amount of prescribed narcotic pain medications to safer, more therapeutic levels.

Why are we doing this?

Nationwide, since treatment with pain became more prevalent in medicine, there has been an increase in the number of deaths related to the use of opioid medicines for chronic pain. Last year, there were over 19,000 accidental deaths caused by prescription opioids and opioid injury and death now outnumber significant automobile accident related injury and death. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. For every death there are 10 treatment admissions for abuse or dependency, 32 emergency room visits for abuse or harm, 130 people who abuse or are dependent and 825 medical non-users. Most of this change occurred within the last 12 years, as opioids became a more popular treatment resource for pain. Unfortunately, studies have failed to show significant reductions in reported pain and/or increased levels of functioning or well-being in persons prescribed opioids for chronic pain

and many have showed deterioration or no improvement in function.

These safety concerns and clinical study findings have prompted significant changes in the treatment guidelines and recommendations of these agents. Prescribed opioid medications will be more heavily regulated by federal and state agencies in the future for these reasons and clinicians have been advised that they must follow the safety science and professional society recommendations with regards to opioid prescriptive writing.

This safety initiative was prompted by several clinical and scientific studies that have linked high dose opioids with unacceptable morbidity and mortality rates in Veterans. There are significant risks associated with higher levels of narcotic medications such as increased depression, increased cardiac dysrhythmias, increased levels of impotence, increased levels of social disability, increased risks for

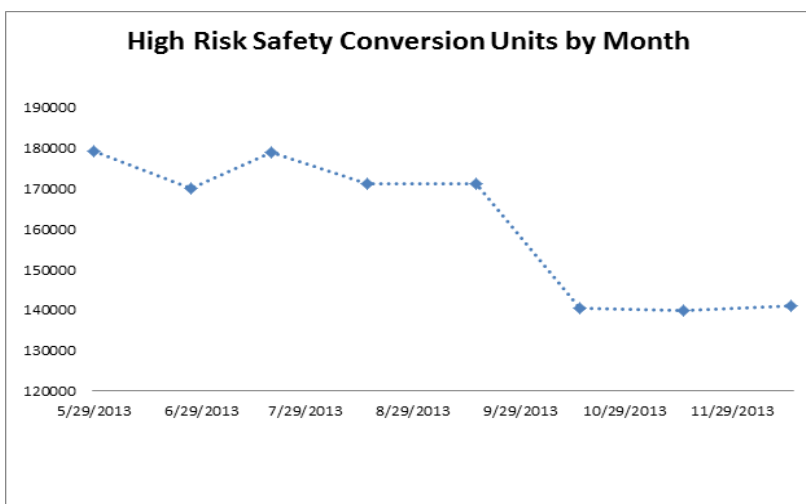
suicide, decreased respiratory drive and death. The program in which the VHSO is participating is a mandatory program which is being initiated across the VA nationally. It mirrors similar ongoing programs that are occurring within many States and local communities.

What are we doing?

Based on guidance from the national safety initiative we have begun:

- a gradual process of individualized titration of many Veterans on higher doses of opioids to lower, safer doses of opioids or transition to alternative therapies
- a critical look at all of our pain management practices and work toward building an interdisciplinary evidence based integrated pain treatment program
- the introduction of safer therapies for chronic pain and pain management

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Patient Comments and Letters

Letter from Patient:

“Dr. Payne is the best dentist I’ve ever had. His dental work is 110% effort. I think a person should be recognized for the job they perform. The VA is very lucky and fortunate to have him.”

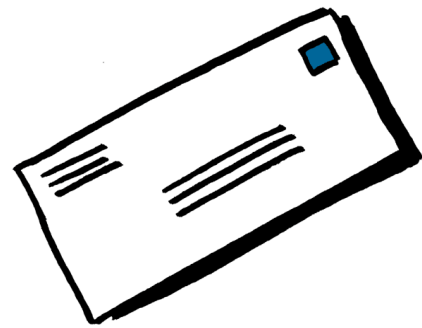
Letter from Patient:

“My intentions are to take the time to express my appreciation for medical treatment I have been given by the VA Hospitals and clinics...”

“I seriously doubt I would be alive right now if not for the VA clinic in Mt. Vernon, Missouri. At the Mount Vernon clinic is where I met **Jennifer Collier, LCSW** so-

cial worker, one of the nicest people I have ever met.”

“Jennifer Collier and Abby Winston are very special people...they saved my life. And the other staff members, **employees at the Mount Vernon Clinic**, have given me the tools needed to live my life.”



Compliance Corner

Hello, I am Adrian Sopshire your CBIO, Compliance and Business Integrity Officer. We here at VHSC believe in a culture of integrity, service, and continuous business improvement which supports adherence to laws, regulations and standards that promote high quality, value-added, Veteran-centric business practices.

Compliance and business integrity strives to achieve this environment in support of Veterans and their families by actively partnering with all VA stakeholders to provide risk-based business oversight of revenue and purchased care operations.

How do I address a potential business compliance issue? First, ask yourself some key questions:

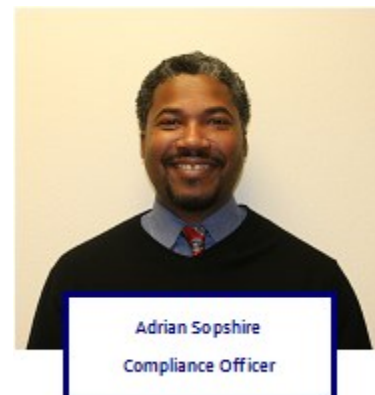
- Is the action legal and ethical?

- Does it comply with VHA regulations and applicable Federal laws?
- Is it consistent with VHA policies and procedures?
- Would you be comfortable discussing this with your family, friends, patients, and community?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, you should go to the next step.

Discuss your concern with your supervisor. If you are not comfortable discussing this issue with your supervisor, you should go to the next step.

Discuss your concern with a higher-level manager. If you are not comfortable with this, go to the next step.



Adrian Sopshire
Compliance Officer

Discuss your concern with your CBI Officer or call the **CBI Helpline at 1-866-842-4357**. The CBI Helpline is available normal work hours and each caller may remain anonymous. Cases will be forwarded to a field CBI Officer who will, in turn, initiate any inquiry and fact-finding process.

Employee Awards

Congratulations to the following VHSO staff members on their length of service awards:

SEPTEMBER:

10 Years Of Service:

Lawrence Diaz
Jada Guidry
Cheryl Scruton

20 Years Of Service:

David Baxter
Victoria Merrick
Isaiah Stansberry

25 Years of Service:

Carla Waterson

35 Years of Service:

Rida Dillard
Janie Johnson

OCTOBER:

10 Years Of Service:

Kory Castor
Sean Ferguson
Mary Gibbs
John Musser
Patti Nicholas
Esther Wagner
Karen Coates

15 Years Of Service:

John Santangelo

35 Years Of Service:

Lonny Floyd

NOVEMBER:

10 Years Of Service:

Kathy Cowan
Kathleen Johnson
Gretta Gilliam

15 Years Of Service:

Robert Schmidt
Cheryl Presswood
Tina Hoover

25 Years Of Service:

Janis Shue
Carolyn Miller
Robin Watts

DECEMBER:

10 Years Of Service:

Patricia Cleveland
Karen Boling
Latonya Lee
James Shelley
Jerry Carter
Annalea Bowers-Cassell
Joyce Butler
Thomas Taglavore

15 Years Of Service:

Benita Harper

20 Years Of Service:

Dana Vickery
Randy Sturgeon

25 Years Of Service:

Rebecca OConnell



Pharmacy Week

Each year Pharmacy takes nominations from the Pharmacy staff on whom they feel has gone above and beyond to help Pharmacy throughout the year.

During Pharmacy Week the staff votes and the top five people are presented a certificate, pin and bag of goodies by the staff. This is the Pharmacy Service's way of showing their appreciation for the system-wide teamwork that has to happen to provide patient-centered care to our Veterans.

This year's winners were:

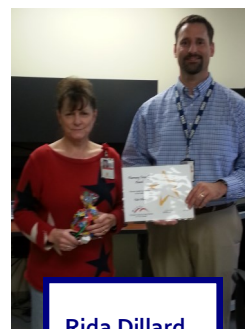
- Birch Wright, Business & Financial Operations Manager
- Leanne Fairley, Supply Technician
- Rida Dillard, Switchboard Operator
- Ron Brewton, IT Specialist
- Wendy Kring, RN



Birch Wright



Leanne Fairley



Rida Dillard



Ron Brewton



Wendy Kring

VHSO Employee of the Month

September:
Cecelia "Hope" Fredrich,
Advanced Practice Nurse,
Home Based Primary
Care, Primary Care



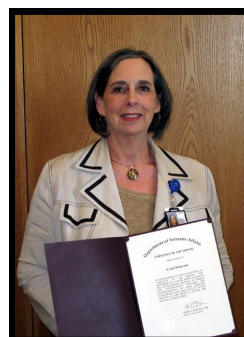
October:
Anna Livingston, Program
Specialist, Nutrition &
Food Services



November:
Nathanial Poole, Ad-
vanced Medical Support
Assistant, Psychiatry Ser-
vice



December:
Carla Waterson, Regis-
tered Nurse, Patient Care
Services



If you know someone you think deserves to be Employee of the Month, be sure to nominate them! The form can be found on our Intranet site, under [Employee Awards](#).

Patient Safety Initiative—Prescribed Narcotic Pain Medication

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What are our safer therapies for chronic pain?

- Acupuncture (balancing the energy of your body)
- Chiropractic Therapy (pressure on muscles and bones to align them)
- Physical Therapy (stretching, warm & cold packs, and other hands on methods)
- Therapeutic exercise (riding a bike, treadmills, walking, & stretching)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (working with a staff member to change habits and healthy emotional reactions to pain)
- Biofeedback (learning the signals your body gives & listening to them)

Have we made progress?

We have made significant progress in our efforts. Since May, the highest risk group of patients treated with opioids at our facility has seen a dosage reduction of roughly 26%

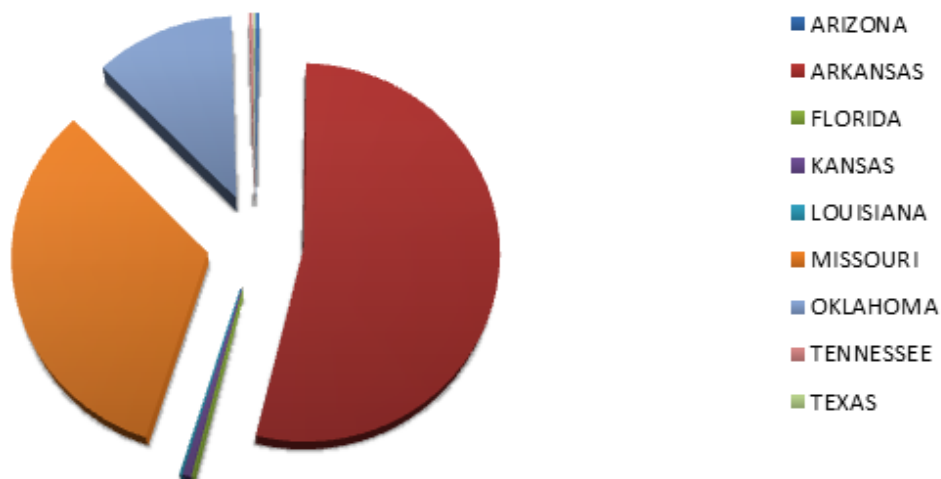
overall. Many patients have been able to successfully discontinue their opioid medications or significantly reduce their dose. Our clinicians and staff have done an outstanding job educating our Veterans about the risks of high dose pain medications and have tailored individual pain management plans for our patients that attempt to address the true source of the pain. Most patients have reported no significant changes in their pain, a fact we attribute to the slow but persistent tapering of these agents and have found the introduction of new options for pain management very beneficial.

What's next?

Work is ongoing across VISN 16 and the rest of the VA to address the treatment of pain more completely. There will continue to be a focus on improving safety for the highest risk patients and a simultaneous focus on improving access to alternative modalities. VHSO is

developing an inter-disciplinary pain management resource and continues to have a review and monitoring resource to help guide therapy to help clinicians determine which patients in their panels are at highest risk. Dr. Worley, Chief of Staff, is leading the VISN 16 Chronic Pain Management Steering Committee as the Chair and under his leadership three sub-committees are busy conducting a resource gap analysis, developing an evidence based resources and recommendations and looking at how VISN 16 will provide integrated pain management services in the future. We are very excited and optimistic about the future for our patients who have chronic pain and look forward to developing a program worthy of their needs. We are very proud of our staff for their hard work on complying with this mandatory initiative and for our patients understanding and patience during this transition.

VHSO Total High Risk By State



Patient Safety Fair

This year's Patient Safety Fair was a hit! VHSO had 222 attendees and 34 posters submitted.

The patient safety fair is conducted annually and is our facility's chance to raise awareness about a specific safety issue that services want everyone to know about. It is a great way to get tons of information that you may not have been familiar with. VHSO is dedicated to providing quality care to our Veterans, and that starts with us. We have a responsibility to strive for safety in everything we do, and educating ourselves on what we can do better is a good step!

Congratulations to our poster contest winners!

The winner's for the poster contest are as follows:

Judge's Choice – Grand Prize - EMS – Monitor Environmental Services

People's Choice—Skipping Hand Hygiene is a Game of Chance You Don't Want to Play

People's Choice – 2nd Place EMS – Monitor Environmental Services

People's Choice – 3rd Place Step Right Up – See the Most Understood Vaccines of All Times

Thank you to all the services that participate, which included: Administration, Facility Management, Medical Service, Chaplain Service, Pathology & Lab, Primary Care (Quality Management, Ft Smith CBOC and HBPC), Pharmacy, Voluntary Service, Nursing Service (Inpatient Mental Health Ward 1A, Nursing Clinical Support & Quality Management), Quality and Performance Service, Social Work Service, Nutrition and Food Service, Respiratory Service, and Environmental Services.

A smaller version of the fair was also hosted at the Mt Vernon, MO CBOC on Monday November 4, 2013. There were fifty-four participants, and two additional posters (Managing Chronic Pain, and Ethics) were added while at the clinic.



1100 North College Ave
Fayetteville, AR

(479) 443-4301
<http://www.fayettevillear.va.gov/>

No Veteran Dies Alone

No Veteran Dies Alone (NVDA) is a one-of-a-kind program in which volunteers provide companionship and assistance to Veterans who are entering the final stages of life. NVDA volunteers "fill in" and provide comfort at the bedside at times when family and friends are unable to be present. NVDA helps ensure that no one should have to face the challenge of death alone.

Responsibilities of NVDA volunteers include:

- holding the Veteran's hand,
- talking to the Veteran,
- assisting family by giving them rest

- breaks,
- reading to the Veteran,
- playing music,
- notifying the nursing staff of any concerns or changes in the Veteran's condition,
- and assisting in making the Veteran comfortable

New volunteers must complete a general volunteer orientation, as well as a Palliative Care specific orientation. The Palliative Care orientation gives an overview of how the unit functions. It also goes over patient privacy regulations and strategies for interacting with patients.



At VHSO we already have several individuals signed up to volunteer for this unique and special volunteer opportunity.

Currently, volunteers are still being accepted, so if you are interested in volunteering, please contact Sue Hess, Acting Chief, Voluntary Service at ext. 64016. VHSO staff members will not have to go through a complete Voluntary Service Orientation to participate.

Have something you want in the next issue?

Please send all requests to:

VHAFAV VHSO PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Subject: News Bites Spring 2014



VHSO is on Facebook!

Receive important highlights and updates about happenings
at the VA and VHSO

Find us at: www.facebook.com/VAFayettevilleAR